



Merely Dreaming



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Chapter 1 by Jarome sandin

Prologue

A clap of thunder bursts through the skies I quickly jump to my feet. Spinning around, I come too the swift conclusion that I was in a forest, but this was of no forest I was familiar with. I grab for my pockets but come up empty, I look around a little more closely and see my sword leaning up against a tree.

How did this get here?

I think to myself as I walk over to said same tree and snatch up my weapon. Instantly noticing a slight trail leading in a straight direction to my left I decide that I have nowhere else to go anyway and head off down the trail.

"Lost?" A voice clear as the setting sun pierces through the quiet of the forest. I spin around just in time to get out of the way of a dark projectile headed for my face, I look up and see a man with black wings that resembled a raven's, he had dark black hair and was dressed in a dark robe.

"You are not from this world, are you?" The fairy asked.

"No." I replied. "Where is this, and who are you?"

"Hesperidum, and Katarn." He said. "So if you don't even know this world, where are you from?"

"Ultris" I lied making up a name on the spot, "how long have you followed me?" I asked in a suspicious tone.

"Over the last few stars, when I first saw you I wanted to find out if you were against me or with me, so, what are you?"

I answered after a brief pause ensuring that I didn't make a mistake with my decision. "I can't decide that until I know who I'm a part of." He smiled at me after a few moments. "Now I can't risk for you to be against me. You are on our side for a while?"

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I then put one hand on the hilt of my sword and prepared for whatever was to come next. Just then He drew a shining black sword from her side and laughed.

"You can't be foolish enough to think you will best me."

Wasting no time, I dashed at him, going for his left wing with the point of my sword. He parried with ease and proceeded to cut around to my back, I spun and deflected his sword, landing off balance. As he went to pierce my left side I moved, but unfortunately not quick enough. The fairy then cut through a fair amount of my skin, but I managed to land a hit on her wing, despite the excruciating gash, and felt my sword shatter in my hands.

"Over so quickly?" He said with an apparent superiority to his tone, "How utterly disappointing." This did not go as well as I thought it would.

In a moment of his false triumph,

He seems to slightly drop his guard.

Could I do it? Could I be that fast?

I dash at him after a rather short two seconds and grab one of his wings, bringing him down to the ground with a soft yet noticeable crunch emanating from the wing. I instantly took off through the forest not being able to bring myself to "end" the fight. Roughly twenty minutes later I come across a ravine spanning beyond my sight.

This is not good, I need to keep moving if i'm going to get anywhere safe.

I quickly set off down the ravine, it took me over an hour but I was almost at the bottom, but about fifteen feet from the bottom my grip gives out and I plummet to the ground, landing hard on my left foot but out of pure muscle memory roll too take the strain off the landing.

This didn't go as planned,
now I have to climb
with a sprained ankle.

Needless of the pain, or in this case simply ignoring it, I continue my journey up the other side of the ravine. foot by foot, inch by inch I gradually make my way to the top instantly collapsing on the ground, but with the strain of the climb and the previous fight weighing on me I slowly succumb to the warmth of the sun and my own general exhaustion and slip into a deep sleep

Chapter 1

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The storm raged on around
on days like this I was glad I decided to live in the woods instead of the cities. Springing up from

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esky jolting me awake,

my bed, I grab my staff and head downstairs to make breakfast. I glance at the clock on the wall and realize that it was one AM. I drag myself back to my room and flop down on the bed, but I did not sleep, I merely laid there and tried to not think about the amount of things I had to do tomorrow, or in this case because of the specific mess of time, today.

Pulling into the school grounds, I quickly swerve into a parking spot that had undoubtedly been meant for me, I turned the key in my ignition and slipped it into my pocket. I knew I was early for all my classes here, but I still wanted time to... My thoughts were quickly interrupted when I gained sight of three rather large and muscular individuals cornering a girl on the side of the entrance.

Despicable, I think a wake up call

Is well suited in this situation.

I reach into my left pocket and pull a leather wallet from which I snatched a throwing star I made in a metal welding class, but this didn't have six sharp points in fact it had been modified to have flat metal diamond shaped sheets of metal on each individual point. I took aim and with pinpoint accuracy threw it at the largest of the men, if you could give them the honor of that title. My effort was instantly awarded when it hit the target square on the back of his head instantly making him and his cronies to turn around, even better the girl slipped past them and ran for the colleges entrance. The three rather brawny looking men merely stared at me with a burning fury in their eyes, just before walking inside the building. It slightly confused me at first, until i noticed the police patrol car pulling into the parking lot,

Figures, but no way

is this fight over.

It turned out to be a rather normal day other than that, I passed all my various tests and quizzes, found out those three guys were Jack (the one I hit with my throwing star) and two of his friends, and managed to stay in the shadows, but unfortunately shadows do not last all day. I was walking around the corner of the hallway counting my steps to the last classroom, when out of nowhere I felt a hand on my shoulder, I stepped forward quickly and spun around, only to see, Jack, and his two cronies, the conversation that ensued was hard for me to remember, but none the less a fight ensued, he threw a right hook, I ducked under and slammed his hand into the

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That was dramatic.

Regardless, I needed to leave before anyone else saw me, with a quick motion I kick my backpack up to arm's reach, snatched it out of the air, and slipped it onto my back instantly making a beeline for the exit.

After a long night working is a security guard in the local jail, I flop down on my bed almost instantly falling asleep,

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I jolted up from the ground as a clap of thunder startled me awake.

That's interesting, I had a dream

In this world last night as well,

I wonder what I missed?

Quickly setting a course in the direction I was heading before, I start off in a light jog. Nearly an hour later I come across a plant that resembled one that grows on my property, basically nature's bandage, I plucked it from the ground and began to tie it to my ankle, but just before I finished I felt a blade touch my throat.

Had she caught up to me?

"And who might you be?" A pristine voice splits the silence of nature catching me off guard.

Drawing on my fine command of language... I say nothing, and continue to focus on the sharp piece of metal pressing against my neck.

"Well? What is your name?" She asked.

The sword pressed against my throat ever more ruthlessly, I needed to do something or else this would not end without bloodshed.

"For being a dream this is awfully realistic." I responded.

"This is no dream." She said to my surprise.

I slipped my hand to her wrist drawing the sword away from my throat and simultaneously elbowing her in the stomach causing her to bend over and for me to bend her whole arm into a breaking point causing her too let go of her sword, which, I snatched up and pressed against the back of her neck.

That was far too easy.

Just as I thought, I felt a sharp pain with a blunt strike to the side of my head toppling me off of my feet. I quickly kicked up into a rather hesitant fight, but in that second I was thrown into a tree with incredible force sending me crashing to the ground with a thud.

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That's not possible..

I was wrong, as I looked up I obtained a better look at my adversary, It was but a girl! No older than twenty with purple hair, Bright red lips, and pale skin that made her purple dress stand out ever more brightly in the moonlight.

How on earth could someone like that, throw me into a tree.

And then I saw it, my God I saw it, the eyes, burning crimson eyes. She started to approach me with an evil aura, I needed to get away but I was too late. A sweeping blow from the sword connected across my chest writhing me with agony quickly being followed up by multiple strikes in quick succession by the tip of the blade across my back, and arms. I managed to offset my opponent by sliding my leg around and hooking it around her leg jolting it back and off balancing her, just enough for me to start to run, this was all I could do, I was outmatched, I glanced back but my assailant was gone hopefully for good.

After thirty minutes of walking, I found myself in a daze, stumbling around in the moonlight, I felt for the gash on my torso, only to discover a blood soaked shirt. I was beginning to get more and more light headed.

I can't keep on like this...

I fell to one knee, what was this? This couldn't be a dream, right? A few seconds later I hit the ground and passed out.

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Sitting in the bus stop, I watch the rainfall stream down over the small glass enclosure, not a great day for a thunderstorm but I can't complain I rather enjoy storms but this one was rather out of place.

"Hello." A voice from beside me caught me a bit off guard causing me to reach for my pocket, but I stop myself short when I caught a look of who was asking me the question.

"Oh, sorry, you caught me a bit off guard, hello."

"No, I'm sorry I didn't mean to startle you, but you looked kind of stressed out and I was wondering if you wanted to grab a coffee and talk about it?" She spoke with a slight and yet

noticeable British accent, although I couldn't make out much of her face just by the brief flashes of thunder. It took me a second to realize that on, people don't usually pay attention to me, but since I was alone, I decided to look myself from other people. As a matter of fact, that's why I was there. In a sudden flash of thunder I saw her smile and then say

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"I know a coffee shop just down the street."

"Yeah that sounds good."

I stood up from the bench and snatched up my backpack quickly opening it up and grabbing my retractable umbrella and giving it to the lass who, rather cautiously, accepted the gesture and began to unfold it, I then picked up my black nickel trim ball top cane and walked outside the small enclosure making my way to the coffee shop with the lady leading the way until we ducked into a small cafe which just so happened to be right next to a pub. I finally obtained a better look at her face, she had a darker white skin and bright golden eyes and dazzling crimson hair that stood out greatly from her gray jacket.

"Sorry for hogging your umbrella." She said to me after we sat down.

"No it's fine I quite like the rain, so what is your name?"

"Phoenix." She replied to my utter astonishment.

"Now that is a good name! Mine is far less impressive, I'm Raleigh."

"If you don't mind me asking, why do you have a cane? I mean you can't possibly be older than twenty five."

"Ah, a friend gave it to me before he died, he even named it, Malevolence, after he passed away I like to have it with me whenever things aren't going well for me so I can constantly be reminded, it can always get worse." I looked over at her and her face had lost it's smile and gained a rather sorrow expression. "But enough of times gone past, what do you want to drink? I haven't been here before so I don't know what is any good." Just out of the corner of my eye I spotted something, or in this case someone that made my day a lot worse, Jack and not just the two idiots that were with him last time, but he took along four of his friends this time.

"Hey it's him!" Jack yelled from across the room.

"Friends of yours?" Phoenix asked.

"No." I replied bleakly. "This won't take long but trust me, you might not be such a friend after." She looked at me with an obviously puzzled face, I merely sighed and turned toward my enemies with cane in hand.

worse. It can always be worse.

Jack walked up to me with his friends trailing behind and instantly took a swing at me, just

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"How many of you saw what happened here?" I called out to the small audience who had stopped with their coffee and were looking on with awe, I saw a multitude of hands go up, and with a smile I sheathed my sword back into the cane, slammed my foot down on my adversary's arm that was still gripping my leg causing him to let go. Walking back to Phoenix, I place my cane beside my backpack and start to contemplate how long it will be until people stop staring at me. "You know what? This Espresso looks pretty good." I state to Phoenix in the attempt get my mind of my shaking hand.

"You know what?" Phoenix responded to me with a rather disconcertingly sure tone, she turned to me, grabbing my shaking hand, and said. "I shouldn't have doubted you were one of us." I stared at her with a bit of confusion.

What did she mean "one of us" one of who?

"One of whom?" I asked.

She leaned in close whispering to me, "A Dreamer."

I was slightly taken aback, what did she mean? Did she know something about my happenings in my all too realistic recent dreams?

"Come on we have things to do." She said to me before standing up from her chair, grabbing the umbrella and motioning for me too follow.

Trusting her could be a mistake.

But not trusting her could be just as big a mistake.

After a few seconds I gather up my backpack and snatch up my cane with the resolve to find out what she knows.

Almost an hour later we were out of the main city and I was led to a small cottage in the woods, I noticed something almost immediately that there was almost nothing in here save for a select few pieces of furniture, a very small kitchen and a bedroom.

"Alright," I say, breaking the silence that had followed us around since the cafe "why am I here?"

Phoenix let out a long sigh, "This is going to be a long story, I'll put the kettle on."

She began to set a pot of tea as I took another look around the small cabin, She started to talk to me from the kitchen.

"There is a big difference between a dream, and a Dreamer, In the dream you can have the most

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She walked over to me with two steaming cups of tea in her hands one of which she offered to me with a noticeably forced smile.

"I know how absurd this sounds." She said to me after taking a sip of her tea.

But I can't stand by and have another Dreamer not know what they are getting themselves into."

My ears perked up on a particular word. "Another?" I asked.

Her face instantly took on a horrified look that quickly turned into more an heir of sorrow.

"I've tried to save others from their death in the Dream, but," Her voice started to become unsteady, "I was too late getting through to them or I couldn't protect them in the Dream."

"I'm sorry," I took a few seconds to go over what Phoenix had told me and set my resolve to find out once and for all. "I look forward to seeing you there."

"You believe me?"

"After what's happened so far I would be foolish not to."

This seemed to lighten her mood, but I still needed to know something.

"Where will I find you?"

"I'm in the main city of the fairies, Tarlatan."

I laughed, "I have no clue where that is, I woke up in a forest and had a few run-ins."

"Who did you run into?"

"Someone named Katarn who caught me pretty hard on my left side with his sword, but I got away and bandaged it up. The second time I wasn't so lucky, I ran into someone, or something that I couldn't identify and passed out after trying to get away for a while."

"That's probably one of the worst things that could have happened, if you fall asleep somewhere that isn't safe you could end up anywhere." She said in a nervous tone.

"I won't know until I go back, and with that in mind thank you for the advice, if I survive the night I'll meet you at the cafe." I gave one last look of assurance to her and started to gather up my backpack and cane.

"Do you want a ride back?" she asked me before I went out the door.

"No thanks, the rain has stopped and I could use a good jog." I then headed out the door and set my sights for home.

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Everything ached, not a single part of me wasn't hurting. What was happening? I opened my eyes and rolled over to get up. I was lying on the grass where I had first passed out. I tried to stand but I was far too weak, managing only

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to stumble a few more steps until I fell back to my knees. I take off my sweatshirt and use it as a bandage across my torso and then tying it tight behind my back.

That'll have to do for now.

I pull myself back up from the ground and slowly start to walk with no real sense of direction.

Now that I come to think of it,

Why didn't I have this cut in the real world?

Just another question for Phoenix I suppose.

After a few minutes of walking I come across a river with a waterfall a few hundred feet down. I walked a little farther up the river as to not get caught falling to a rather painful end at the bottom of the waterfall. After about thirty yards I slip off my jacket and dive into the water, at first the cold water sent chills down my spine, but after about a little bit I was used to the temperature and started to enjoy the refreshment of the water. I looked back and realized the current was much stronger than I had originally thought, I must've floated a good two hundred feet from where my starting point, I swim over to the shore and pull myself up flopping down on the grass relishing in the heat of the sun. This may be the first calm moment I've had since this all started, hopefully not my last either, but I still had to find out where Phoenix is.

After about an hour I slowly made my way back up to my jacket only to find it missing from its resting place, did an animal take it? I looked around for it for a few minutes but came up short to finding it. Just as I was about to give up I heard some giggling coming from above me, there were two girls up there, but they weren't normal, they had ears like a feline and the tail of a fox, along with claws like a jaguar, and to no surprise in one of their hands was my sweatshirt.

That figures.

I stepped back a few feet and got a running start at the tree just managing to grab the first branch and pull myself up and continuing till I reached a point where I was on their level, I could see from their faces that they were not expecting me lay chase. The one that held my jacket had blonde hair and yellow eyes with a bushy red tail and crimson dress. Her partner in crime was white haired, blue eyed, and had a even bushier white tail with a blue dress but the one with the blonde hair looked like the younger of the two. I gave them both a smile before I said.

"I want my jacket back."

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finally knocking them out of the tree and tumbling them to the ground. I swiftly make my way down the tree deciding to jump with about ten feet to go landing surprisingly softly.

I started to walk over to them when I heard footsteps from behind them, it was Katarn, this time all three of us exchanged uncertain glances, the two girls ran behind me but stopped at the river's edge with looks of terror on their faces. I turned around only to be greeted by Katarn's sword heading for my face, I moved out of the way just in time for it to miss me, but the barrage was unrelenting, with me dodging most of the attacks but still picking up a few cuts and scratches on the way. I couldn't even get close enough to do anything, and at this rate I would lose horribly. But just before another strike caught me across the face His sword stopped mid swing, he tried to move it but it wouldn't budge, I looked behind me and heard the two girls saying something, it was all the distraction I needed. I closed the gap in a flash and started a hail of strikes on my adversary, after a few seconds I saw an opening and slammed both my hands on his ears disorientating him, giving me enough time to slip behind and throw him into a choke hold falling down to the ground as I did so. To my luck it only took a few seconds for him to pass out and hit the ground completely, I staggered back a few steps and fell onto my back as exhaustion took ahold of me.

"Whoa!"

I heard the voice of the white haired girl call out at the same time hearing a splash in the water. I got up with what energy I had left to look and see what happened, but I only saw the blonde haired girl with a look of shock on her face while she watched her sister get taken away by the current towards the waterfall.

"Can you save her!?" I hear the girl say as she turned to me.

I was half expecting a trick of some sort but after seeing the horrified expression on her face I decided that I could use a guide and that I didn't want to have someone die while I could do something. So with surge of adrenaline I sprint down and past the now drowning girl and dive into the water coming up onto a rock the protruded out of the river just before the waterfall, She was coming on fast, if I messed this up both of us would take a tumble, when She came into reach I grabbed her hand pulling her out of the water and then diving back in towards the shore. It was much more difficult to carry someone when swimming then just yourself but I had no

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My eyes shot open, I was spinning to much to have my feet hit first, I slammed into the water a few seconds later with my back hitting first followed by my the back of my head, knocking me unconscious.

Chapter Two

Spazzing out of bed with a sudden rush of adrenaline, I slammed into the floor before I realized that I wasn't slamming into concrete like water.

I... I am still alive.

I had to got meet with Phoenix, as I grabbed my bag and slipped on my trench coat, and headed out the door, I got to thinking.

Is this reality, the real reality?

When I think about it, there is an interesting explanation to this, if there were three stoplights on a straight road and the first stoplight was this reality. When we fell asleep we all get a green light at the first and proceed to the second where all of us have our regular dreams. But out of so many people being stuck at the second light. Only a handful could ever have the go ahead to make it too the third. This included myself and Phoenix, except that something still didn't make sense, why can't everyone else get past the second light?

"That's an interesting comparison." I hear a familiar voice from behind me catching me off guard. Had I been talking out loud again?

It really is a horrible habit of mine. As I turn around I see Phoenix standing behind me with a pondering expression placed on her face.

"Oh, hello Phoenix, how long have you been following me?"

"Just since I saw you pass the library, i'm glad that see that nothing happened to you last night." She said with a smile forming on her face.

"That's what we need to talk about," As I said this a worried expression came upon her. "What type of species are there in the dream?"

"Well, there are the fairies, who are the more peaceful species and are known for their kindness and hospitality. Then there are the dark fairies, one of whom you've met, they are basically the

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Feline and a Human, although they are more known for their playful and laid back nature they are somehow able to change people's perception of them." When she finished she gave out a long sigh and started to walk to the cafe. With me following by her side.

At least I finally know what I'm dealing with.

"Dealing with which one?"

I had done it again.

"Based on what you said it was two Petra." I sighed.

"Oh, what happened?"

I then recalled my entire experience to her including the jacket which prompted a small, mocking smile. When I had finished we already had our tea ordered and had dug into our bagels.

"You fell off a waterfall? how are you still here!"

"That's my question, either I was pulled from the lake by someone or I'm floating there, but I have a feeling if I was still in the water I would be under it and not on top of it."

She looked rather concerned and thoughtful when I had finished, but it slowly turned to a look of annoyance which, needless to say surprised me.

"I searched a good portion of the woods last night looking for any signs of you but I didn't even come across a river, waterfall, or even a pond in my search."

"When I wake up, or technically when I fall asleep depending on where I am i'll try to stay close to the lake so it'll be easier to find me, but right now I need to go, I have some things I need to get done before I can go back to bed."

As I stand up I toss my backpack over my shoulder and say one last goodbye to Phoenix before heading out the door to do my errands.

A few minutes later I was at the grocery store looking over my list: apples, pears, oranges, milk, bread, butter, salt, flour. I slowly trailed off into my own thoughts as I subconsciously made my way around the store grabbing my items.

So if I fell around roughly 58.3 meters then it should have taken me around 6.7 seconds to hit the water which would mean that I fell at a rate of 9.5 meters a second which would also mean that I hit the water at... 80 MPH, from what I know I should be dead, but this is a dream world after all so I suppose gravity could be a bit different than in this world, or my calculations are

incorrect. Only now did I notice I was thinking out loud again. I looked around, but to my relief there was nobody around. The lake was still there. I wanted attention, a few minutes later when I was done getting my items I was still there. I only discovered that a storm was closing in. Terrific, just what I didn't need tonight.

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Although in all actuality I enjoyed the rain very much. Just staring at it made me think harder and deeper than before, cliché I know but I couldn't help it. After a couple hours of reading medical books and manuals and training in the more lethal of martial arts to prepare for my dream, I felt the exhaustion of my activity's set in and slowly fell asleep whilst reading my late friend's military medical manual.

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The warmth of a fire was a welcoming feeling from the all too expected chill. The sound of the crackling fireplace almost made me forget that I was supposed to be hearing water rush around me. Slowly opening my eyes I see a blaze in front of me with mere glass and iron separating me from its flame.

"You know we could add crushed apples to the recipe to sweeten it." I hear from a slightly familiar voice behind me.

"I think that might work, but then we would need a bigger crust so it doesn't overflow when it's baked." I hear from a second voice that sounded from not too far away from the first.

Slowly standing up I begin to realize just how exhausted my body really was and flopped back down on the floor.

That was pathetic.

In an instant after my second attempt to stand I felt drowsy again and collapsed on the ground unconscious.

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I shot out of my chair in a cold sweat with my eyes scanning my surroundings for anything out of place.

What happened? Why did I wake up?

There was nobody here except for myself, and certainly no one would be visiting me at this time of night, until I noticed that the book had fallen from my grip and landed on the floor before I sprang out of the chair. Weary but wary, I check the locks on my house, but after finding nothing special I drag myself back to my room and flop down on my bed.

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"Leif! He's awake!" I hear a voice from a few feet behind me. I was still facing the fire letting its warmth soak into me.

"I'll be there in a minute Taj!"

So the blonde is taj and the white is leif...

Good to know.

I still had no energy, which for me isn't all that common, I was used to being able to stay up days on end if need be, but this had done me in.

"What happened." I managed to groan while grasping at my head which had taken on a horrifyingly painful migraine.

"You fell off a waterfall." The younger of the two said to me in a tone that was just a bit too cheerful considering the subject.

"Than why am I still alive?" As I said this I tried to stand up but quickly fall back to a laying position just like before.

"Wow, I didn't realise that you were that badly hurt." Leif chimed in as I heard her enter the room.

"Before you hit the water I surrounded you with a barrier, but I was slightly late, you hit the water just before the orb completely encased you." Taj said in an edgy tone.

"Brilliant." I say as I finally build up the strength to stand. However, this merely resulted in my bracing myself against the wall while the migraine and lightheadedness took ahold. I managed a pained smile and asked, "I suppose we're even now, and if that's the case I need to keep moving." When I had finished my sentence I noticed a change of face on both Leif and Taj, Taj's expression changed to worry and a bit of curiosity, but Leif took on a ludicrously suspicious smile.

"Where are you going? And for that matter where are you going?" Taj asked.

I was slightly hesitant to answer the question posed to me considering I really know nothing about them, but I did need help to find it anyway so it would be counterproductive to not answer.

"Somewhere called the Taltran."

They both looked at me with a wide eyed expression.

"You want to go there? Why do you want to go there?" Leif asked.

"A friend told me to look for the spirit world, I was curious."

"It's not that far, but you do know where the spirit world is, right?"

"And what's wrong with that?" I asked them, finally shaking myself of my headache.

They exchanged wary glances.

"Fairies aren't on very good terms with our kind."

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When I showed a face of determination to go to the city Leif asked me a question that caught me a bit off guard.

"Are you sure you don't want to stay here with us?" Leif asked.

At this moment I began to question what was really going on here.

"Didn't I just say that I was supposed to meet someone at the city?"

"Yeah," She moved closer to me as she said this, "but you could just stay here with us instead."

I suppose it wouldn't be so bad

to stay here for a while.

Why did I think that! no I need to find Phoenix!

"I have to find..." I was interrupted by Leif again who was next to me now and had her hand on my shoulder.

"Don't you want to stay here with us?"

Part of me does want to stay here.

It would be nice to settle down

and take a break from all this.

Why do I keep doing that?

"I need to..." My headache suddenly increased tenfold.

"I think you need to stay here, don't you?"

"Y...Yeah I need to..." I stammered.

No. get. out. of. my. Head.

I pushed her back and clutched my head while falling back to the ground.

"That was mean Leif." I heard Taj whisper.

"I needed to see what he would do."

I felt like I was going to pass out, but I couldn't do that now. After a couple minutes pass, I find the strength to clear my head and stand straight again.

"Where is Taltran." I say with a hint of anger in my tone.

"Follow the river up a few miles and you'll see it." Taj said before handing me some bread wrapped in cloth.

"Thank you Taj. And Leif, if we meet again, don't expect a very warm greeting."

With that I left the house and realized that it was right next to the lake that I had "fallen" in.

Two and a half hours later, I come across the most magnificent city, it looked as though it were made of pure silver, with fountains gushing all around and about inside.

"Raleigh!" I turn and look at the woman who had called my name. She was dressed in a crimson dress with some sort of flaming aura coming about her. As she landed beside me, her expression turned to that of worry. "What happened to you?"

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"Dark fairy, Vampire, and two Petra."

She grabbed my hand and launched off into the sky, with burning like wings forming on her back.

Amazing, even after what i've seen,
this was amazing.

"Where are we going?" I ask over the sound of rippling wind passing by at an ever increasing rate.

"To get you somewhere safe." Phoenix answered.

After a few minutes of exhilarating flying, we landed by a stone building on the far left side of the city walls. As Phoenix led me inside her wings dissipated and seemed to fold into her back.

"Phoenix really was an appropriate name." I mentioned to Her as we came into a decent size room with a long couch, a small table with two chairs, along with a select few closed doors down a poorly lit hallway. She looked back at me with a smile on her face at my comment.

"The first time I came here I was so confused with what was going on with me, but after a couple nights I met a fellow Dreamer in the real world." Her face suddenly gained a heir of seriousness.

"After almost a year of him training me, he was killed in a siege on this city."

I heard her mention this when we talked back in reality, but I didn't know the details.

"But you've stumped me so far, from what I can tell you aren't anything special in this world."

"Thank you."

It took her a couple seconds before She realized what she said.

"Oh! Sorry, I didn't mean it like that, it's just that I can't find anything different in you, you're normal."

"Thank you again, on a second thought do you have any bandages, and aspirin."

She looked me over a glint of realization shone in her eyes. Walking to the cabinet, Phoenix grabbed a box from a cupboard and handed it to me. Looking inside the box I find a variety of medical bandages along with some surgical equipment.

"You know what," I ask after a few minutes of silence. "You said that you obtained your ability the first time you woke up here right?" She noded her head in response. "But your ability is slightly obvious, it is possible that I just haven't figured out what mine is, also you said there

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"I hadn't thought about it, I suppose you could be a Vampire, or a Petra, either of those would probably be more likely considering you don't have wings."

"I seriously hope that isn't the case, I had a run in with a vampire before, I didn't like her very much, same goes for the two Petra. Oh that's right! About the Petra, it not that the change someone's perception as their image, it's how that change someone's perspective."

"What did they do to you?" Phoenix asked in a suspicious tone.

"I don't want to talk about it, but on a different subject, why aren't there any humans here?"

"All the humans were killed, but they weren't killed by dark Fairies or Vampires Yelitals for that matter, they just went insane with power and tried to take this city, but they had the Petra as an ally."

That's why Leif and Taj were so confused when I told them I was going to this city.

"So from what I can tell, if all humans are wiped out, and i'm not a vampire or a dark fairy, then am I like you?"

"I'm technically considered a fairy, but I've actually been influenced by the animal Phoenix in this world." She took a few moments to think before she spoke again. "I suppose it's possible you could be influenced by an animal here as well, come to think of it all the Dreamers so far have been influenced by an animal."

"If that's the case, then I really want to know what it is. But what I really want right now is some sleep."

"Second door on the left, i'll meet you at the cafe." She maintained her heir of suspicion, (no doubt about the two Petra from before) while I walked over to the room, and upon opening the door I find a rather bare interior save for a desk, chair and bed. I slowly ease myself in between the sheets and quickly slip off into a deep sleep.

~~~

An animal?

But what kind of animal?

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"I kind of figured that you would be reading up on that." I hear Phoenix say as she takes her seat next to me. "Find anything interesting?"

"I wish, the most I found that related to the origin of my name was, well nothing."

"It might not show up in a book, you know that right?"

As she said this I turned to a bookmarked page, flipped the book over to her view displaying a picture of a Phoenix in it.

"Ooh let me see." She said as she happily took the book from me and started to read the folklore behind it. I merely gave out a sigh and buried my head into my arms that were now resting on the table.

"Are you alright?" Phoenix asked after a minute of silence.

"I'll survive, although what happens now? Do we just try and survive in this dream?"

"That's the problem, the dark fairies, Yelitals, and some vampires are staging an attack on the city in a couple days, I only found out after you were asleep."

"I've heard you mention yelital a few times but I still don't know what they are."

"They're basically reincarnated dragons that took on a half animal and half animal and half dark fairy form."

"That... Doesn't sound very good, where do the Petra stand on this?"

"I don't know, but i'm assuming they will remain neutral."

"What do we need to do during the siege?"

"You aren't doing anything, i'm taking care of the secondary walls defenses." She said matter a factly.

I looked up from the burial place of my head and stared at her for a couple of seconds with a growing amount of disappointment and confusion.

"My name's not phoenix, it's Pallavi, I always hated that name and when I moved away I started the dream and began to call myself Phoenix."

"If it's alright with you, i'm still going to call you Phoenix."

She threw a warm smile in my direction.

"Thanks, but I do need to know that you won't do anything stupid, or reckless."

"I'm not promising that, but i'll try and stay away from the majority of it's fight."

Phoenix let out a disappointed sigh.

"That's the best I'm going to get from you." She said with an irritated tone.  
"Unfortunately for you yes but if you didn't get your name from your name, where did you get them from?"

"I have less of an idea where I received them than you, but with the assault that is coming on the city I think I need to get back there."

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"It's going to be a bit before I join you, I still have somewhere i need to go."

With that I waved her goodbye and stared into my now almost empty cup of tea. I need to find out what I truly am, which can only mean one thing... reading.

A couple hours later I was back at my home with a stack of books far larger than I stood and all with the common theme of animals that, with any luck would tell me what I was to become.

~~~

Streams of pain rolled down my body as I began to wake. An unrelenting waterfall of agony poured down my head the my legs and finishing with my feet, I felt my bones crack and fold, bend and snap without cease. I started to convulse violently as I felt myself start to change. Suddenly, there was nothing, the pain had stopped. I quickly threw myself out of bed and found that I was much more agile than usual, I seemed to have grown as well. I walked over to the door but as I reached for the handle I discovered that my hand had six velociraptor like claws and had taken on a burning crimson seemingly inside of my arm and dark slate stone like plating, but not just my hand, my entire body!

What animal is this?

I looked down at my legs and discovered that they resembled a wolf's hind legs but my feet had taken on six claws with another protruding from the back of my foot.

And then I caught sight of myself, as I turned the corner I caught sight of my glory, and horror in the mirror. I had etched plates of rock like armor around my entire body with sections forming off into large bladed spikes. I had a unique swarming streams of blood vermillion coursing about my form. My face formed to a nightmarish like monster with the top jaw a row of serrated spikes and my bottom splitting off into two sections like a spider. The rest of my head had taken to the general theme of stone with it splitting off in the middle surrounding the majority of my cranium. I took to being lost in my own eyes for a while, a pure black make with a small fiery red light flickering in and out of view. I spun around a bit and found I had multiple nagita blade like spikes on my back that were dazzling blood red with boulder like designs imprinted throughout my entire figure.

"Raleigh?"

I turned to my left and saw Phoenix standing there in shock.

"I figured it out," I said in a much louder voice than I intended as though my voice was passing through space and time.

"You need to think about it," Phoenix said slowly.

The opposite? But I woke up to this.

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What was I thinking before I fell asleep?

I felt my bones begin to crack and fold again with the pain spilling over, but this transformation took far less time than the morning, after a few minutes of excruciating pain I was back to my human form.

"Are you alright?" Phoenix asked to me while she slowly etched forward.

"I'll live." I say meekly.

Although I was still spinning from the experience I managed a faint smile.

"Do you know what that was?" I asked.

"That was a Veirturn."

"Is that good?" I ask with a slight heir of suspicion.

"I wish it was a good thing, but it's more of a burden now. The only real problem is that the Veirturn were wiped out a while back by the fairies because they were attacking the Petra when they were still allies."

"I think that's my cue to leave the city." I say as get up from my spot on the ground and walk toward the rather quaint kitchen in search for food.

"That's another problem, the city is on the brink of war, so anyone caught entering or leaving is killed off."

"Guess I'm not leaving anytime soon." I stated sarcastically.

After selecting a few items that resembled food I found myself walking back to a small wooden table and taking a seat on a redwood chair.

"So what else do you know about the Veirturn?"

Phoenix was still acting cautious and and had an unmistakeable hint of fear glittering in her eye.

"I don't know enough about them to tell you anything else."

I sighed and studied my meal with the aroma of bread quickly filling the air as I devoured my food. After a disturbingly long silence I felt a small quake ripple through the city that immediately followed up with worried shouts and a long sound that resembled a trumpet.

"We're under attack?" Phoenix said in a bewildered tone.

"Let's hope not." I state whilst getting up and walking out the still open door to the house. The sight outside was a mess, Fairies rushing, and flying about in a very noticeable panic.

"I'll find my own way then, see you when I wish." I said.

"Not if you're seen by a guard you'll be killed." Phoenix yelled at me.

"I'll find my own way then, see you when I wish." I said.

Just as I finished my sentence I felt a small quake ripple through the city that immediately followed up with worried shouts and a long sound that resembled a trumpet.

"That doesn't sound good." I comment.

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But before I could figure out what was causing the small earthquake. The mass of the wall crumbled into a large heap before being reduced to ashes with a great blaze.

“Phoenix? that wasn't you right?”

I looked over at Phoenix who in turn was staring at me with an extremely potent, “you seriously think that” look about her. I merely shrugged and prepared for whatever was going to come through the gaping hole.

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